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XI.—REIZ IST SCHÖNHEIT IN BEWEGUNG.

Among the most characteristic and most positive propositions in Lessing's *Laokoon* are these from chapter XXI: "Ein anderer Weg, auf welchem die Poesie die Kunst in Schilderung körperlicher Schönheit wiederum einholet, ist dieser, dass sie Schönheit in Reitz verwandelt. Reitz ist Schönheit in Bewegung." F. T. Vischer said with reference to this chapter,¹ "Lessing hatte zuerst die Anmuth (er sagt: Reiz, wovon nachher) als Schönheit in der Bewegung definiert." Commenting on the same chapter, G. E. Guhrauer wrote,² "Reiz ist Schönheit in Bewegung, und eben darum für den Maler weniger als den Dichter bequem. Dieser Begriff, eine glückliche Bereicherung der Ästhetik, von welcher Schiller späterhin in dem Aufsatz über Anmuth und Würde einen so sinnreichen und fruchtbaren Gebrauch machte, findet sich 'vor Lessing schon bei Home, welchen er bei seiner Vertrautheit mit den schottischen Philosophen unstreitig gekannt hat. Insofern ist es nicht ganz genau, wenn Vischer . . . von Lessing sagt, dass der Begriff der Anmuth bei ihm zuerst gefunden werde." H. Blümner³ rushed to the defence of Lessing and Vischer. Grace, he admitted, is associated with motion not only by Home, but also by Webb (*Inquiry into the Beauties of Painting*, 1764), and by Hagedorn (*Betrachtungen über die Malhercy*, 1762),—"dennoch durfte Vischer mit vollem Rechte Lessing als den Vater dieses Begriffes bezeichnen, da er durch ihn erst entwickelt und in die Ästhetik eingeführt worden ist." On

¹ *Ästhetik*, Reutlingen and Leipzig, 1846, I, p. 184.

² *Lessing, sein Leben und seine Werke*, 1854, II, I, p. 47; ed. Maltzahn and Boxberger, Berlin, 1881, II, p. 43.

³ *Laokoon*, Berlin, 1880, p. 641.

a previous page (31) Blümner had pointed out that Webb's idea of grace was not his own, but went back to Home.

Blümner makes an obvious error as to the relations of Home and Webb. Webb's *Inquiry* appeared first in 1760, not 1764, as Blümner has it;¹ and the first volume of Home's *Elements of Criticism* did not appear until 1762. But Home had even more than two years in which to read Webb, if he cared to; for, as Wilhelm Neumann properly reports in his dissertation,² Home's first edition has nothing to say about grace; and, as a matter of fact, the definition in question is not made until the third edition is printed, in 1765.³

But not even Webb is "der Vater dieses Begriffes." A history of the conception in English esthetics of the eighteenth century must go back, as Franz Pomezny has done,⁴ to Shaftesbury;⁵ and ought to include, as Pomezny

¹ P. 29.

² *Die Bedeutung Home's für die Ästhetik und sein Einfluss auf die deutschen Ästhetiker*, Halle, 1894, p. 114.

³ "Grace, then, is an agreeable attribute, inseparable from motion, as opposed to rest, and as comprehending speech, looks, gestures, and locomotion" (vol. I, chapter XI, p. 347).

⁴ *Grazie und Grazien in der deutschen Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts*, in Lipps and Werner's *Beiträge zur Ästhetik*, VII, Hamburg, 1900. With reference to Hogarth's *Analysis of Beauty* (London, 1753, p. v), Pomezny opines (p. 50), "Lamozzo dürfte vielleicht der erste sein, der das Wesen des Reizes in der Bewegung liegen lässt"—meaning Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo, in whose *Trattato dell' arte della Pittura, Scultura ed Architettura* (Milan, 1585), we do indeed find the sentences, "Dicesi adunque che Michelangelo diede una volta questo avvertimento a Marco da Siena pittore suo discepolo, che dovesse sempre fare la figura piramidale, serpentinata, e moltiplicata per una, due, e tre. Ed in questo precetto parmi che consista tutto il segreto della pittura, imperocchè la maggior grazia, e leggiadria che possa avere una figura è, che mostri di muoversi, il che chiamano i pittori furia della figura" (vol. I, p. 33, of the reprint at Rome, in 1844).

⁵ Shaftesbury only touches upon the subject of grace, and is far from developing a theory of it; but he invariably connects it with motion, as, for example, in these passages from his *Advice to an Author* (1710):—"Tis

did not, consideration of a little book that did not escape the notice of Neumann.' On page 121 of Neumann's dissertation we read, "Früher, als sie alle, und vielleicht nicht ohne Einfluss auch auf Home, ist ein kleines Werkchen, dem wir hier Gerechtigkeit widerfahren lassen wollen, durch Anführung der unsern Gegenstand berührenden Stellen. Es ist ein Büchlein von Henry Beaumont: *Crito, or a Dialogue on Beauty*. Die zweite Auflage des populären Schriftchens, nach der ich citiere, erschien bereits im Jahre 1742."¹

My present design is only in part a contribution to the history of English esthetics; it is chiefly the *Rettung* of a man to whom Blümner did manifest injustice²—without, apparently, knowing anything more about him than what he learned from Lessing—a man to whom historians of esthetics owe more respectful attention than they seem to have given him; namely, Joseph Spence. In that very *Polymetis* (1747) from which Lessing³ quoted the sentence, "Scarce anything can be good in a poetical description which would appear absurd if represented in a statue or picture," we find a passage which Lessing may have over-

undeniable, however, that the perfection of grace and comeliness in action and behaviour can be found only among the people of a liberal education" (p. 190); "there can be no kind of writing which relates to men and manners, where it is not necessary for the author to understand poetical and moral truth, the beauty of sentiments, the sublime of characters; and carry in his eye the model or exemplar of that natural grace which gives to every action its attractive charm" (p. 336). I quote from the first volume of *Characteristicks*, the third edition, 1723.

¹ Pomezny failed to follow up a clue to this work that he had in hand. Cf. the note to p. 72: "Vgl. hierzu *Criton, ou de la grace et de la beauté. Extrait d'un Dialogue traduit librement de l'Anglois (Les Graces* [Paris, 1769], s. 225): 'Je crois même qu'il n'a point voulu faire entendre autre chose, lorsqu'il dit qu' Énée reconnut la Déesse, sa mère, sous son déguisement, à son air seul, à son port.'"

² *Laokoon*, p. 23.

³ *Laokoon, Nachlass B*, ed. Blümner, p. 415.

looked, but which ought not to have been overlooked by Lessing's editor, as follows:¹ "To return to the eyes and look of Venus; the poets are fuller as to the former than any statue can be. They had the painters to copy from, as well as the statuaries; and could draw several ideas from the life, which are not to be expressed in marble. The sculptor can only give you the proportions of things, and one single attitude of a person in any statue or relievo. The painter can do the same, and add the natural colours as they appear on the surfaces of things; and by the management of lights and shades, may fling them into their proper distances. The poet can describe all that either of the others express by shape, or colours; and can farther put the figure into a succession of different motions in the same description. So that of the three sister-arts of imitation, poetry (in this at least) has the advantage over both the others; as it has more power, and can take a larger compass than either of them. This must have given the poets an advantage, in describing the quick and uncertain motions of Venus's eyes; and occasions our meeting with some expressions in them, which cannot be explained either from statues, or paintings. Such is that epithet of *Paeta*, in particular, which the Roman writers give to Venus; and which refers, perhaps, to a certain turn of her eye, and her catching it away again, the moment she is observed."

Webb's *Inquiry into the Beauties of Painting* bears a dedication "To the Reverend Mr. Spence," beginning thus: "The most accurate observer of the beauties of nature must be the best judge of their imitations; and the same elegance of imagination which forms the painter, must enlighten the critic. It was natural for me, under this persuasion, to

¹ P. 67 of the second edition (1755), which has the same pagination as the first.

address my observation on Painting, to the author of *Crito*." The author of *Crito* was Joseph Spence.¹ Neumann's citations from it are accurate so far as they go; they hardly give an adequate impression of the urbanity of the style, and are purposely restricted to Spence's definition of grace. A fuller treatment of the dialogue would show Spence in interesting relations to Lomazzo (and so to Lionardo da Vinci), to Le Brun, Félibien, de Piles, Shaftesbury, and Burke, as well as to the ancient classics. I must, however, here follow Neumann's example, and confine myself to the subject of grace.

"I am apt to think," says *Crito*,² "that everything belonging to beauty (by which I need not repeat to you at every turn that I mean personal beauty) would fall under one or other of these four heads: color, form, expression, and grace; the two former of which I should look upon as the body, and the two latter as the soul of beauty." "A parent can see genteelness in the most awkward child, perhaps, that ever was born; and a person who is truly in love will be pleased with every motion and air of the person beloved; which is the most distinguishing character that belongs to grace. 'Tis true, this is all a mistaken grace; but, as to that particular person, it has all the effects of the true."³ "Grace often depends on some very little incidents in a fine face; and in actions, it consists more in the manner of doing things than in the things themselves. It is perpetually varying its appearances, and is therefore much more difficult to be considered than anything fixed and steady."⁴

¹He wrote over the pseudonym "Sir Harry Beaumont" (not "Henry Beaumont" as Neumann says); and his *Crito* appeared in London in 1752, not (Neumann) 1742, or earlier. There was a reprint in *Fugitive Pieces*, vol. i, 1762. I quote from the *Bibliotheca Curiosa*, ed. Edmund Goldsmid, privately printed, Edinburgh, 1885.

² P. 11.

³ P. 61.

⁴ P. 34.

"The chief dwelling-place of grace is about the mouth, though at times it may visit every limb or part of the body. But the mouth is the chief seat of grace, as much as the chief seat for the beauty of the passions is in the eyes."¹

"There are two very distinct and, as it were, different sorts of grace, the majestic and the familiar (I should have called the latter by the name of pleasing, had not I been afraid of a tautology; for grace is pleasingness itself); the former belongs chiefly to the very fine women, and the latter to the very pretty ones; *that* is the more commanding, and *this* the more delightful and engaging. The Grecian painters and sculptors used to express the former most strongly in the looks and attitudes in their Minervas; and the latter, in those of Venus."² "There is no poet I have ever read who seems to me to understand this part of beauty so well as our own Milton. He speaks of these two sorts of grace very distinctly, and gives the majestic to his Adam, and both the familiar and majestic to Eve; but the latter in a less degree than the former."³ "Though grace is so difficult to be accounted for in general, yet I have observed two particular things which, I think, hold universally in relation to it. The first is, that there is no grace without motion; by which I mean, without some genteel or pleasing motion, either of the whole body, or of some limb, or at least of some feature."⁴ "Virgil in one place (*Aen.* i, 46) points out the majesty of Juno, and in another (*Aen.* iv, 147) the graceful air of Apollo, by only saying that they move; and possibly he means no more when he makes the motion of Venus (*Aen.* i, 406) the principal thing by which Aeneas discovers her under all her disguise; though the commentators, as usual, would fain find out a more dark and mysterious meaning for it."⁵

¹ P. 35.² P. 38.³ P. 39.⁴ P. 41.⁵ Pp. 41 f.

All the best statues are represented as in some action or motion ; and the most graceful statue in the world, the Apollo Belvedere, is so much so that when one faces it at a little distance, one is always apt to imagine that he is actually going to move on toward you. All graceful heads, even in the portraits of the best painters, are in motion ; and very strongly in those of Guido in particular ; which, as you remember, are all either casting their looks up toward Heaven, or down toward the ground, or side-way, as regarding some object.”¹

“The second observation is, that there can be no grace, with impropriety ; or, in other words, that nothing can be graceful that is not adapted to the characters of the person. The graces of a little lively beauty would become ungraceful in a character of majesty, as the majestic airs of an empress would quite destroy the prettiness of the former. The vivacity that adds a grace to beauty in youth would give an additional deformity to old age ; and the very same airs which would be charming on some occasions, may be quite shocking when extremely mis-timed, or expressly misplaced.”²

“And yet I cannot think, as some seem inclined to do, that grace consists entirely in propriety ; because propriety is a thing easy enough to be understood, and grace, after all we can say about it, very difficult. Propriety, therefore, and grace are no more one and the same thing than grace and motion are. ’Tis true, it cannot subsist without either ; but then there seems to be something else which I cannot explain, and what I do not know that ever anybody has explained, that goes to the composition ; and which possibly may give it its greatest force and pleasingness.”³

“The most celebrated of all the ancient painters was

¹ P. 42.

² Pp. 42 f.

³ P. 43.

Apelles ; and the most celebrated of the modern, Raphael. And it is remarkable that the distinguishing character of each of them was grace. . . . Grace has nothing to do with the lowest part of beauty, or colour ; very little with shape, and very much with the passions ; for it is she who gives their highest zest, and the most delicious part of their pleasingness to the expressions of each of them.”¹

In the *Crito* it does not occur to Spence to take the short step from motion suggested in a painting or a statue, to motion performed or imitated in the dance, or in music, or in poetry, as the most convenient vehicle for the expression of grace. But in the passage quoted from *Polymêtis* he clearly sets forth that poetry has greater power than painting or sculpture to express “the quick and uncertain motions of Venus’s eyes,” which motions are certainly graceful, and eminently transitory. Lessing’s arguments on transitoriness and grace prove no more than this.

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¹ P. 44.